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March 4, 2022

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chair
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairperson Lofgren:

It's been 722 days since the House Sergeant-at-Arms (SAA) barred open access to House Office Buildings on March 12, 2020. More than one year after the initial building closure, on April 29, 2021, the SAA lifted the complete restriction on visitor access to House Office Buildings and began to allow a small stream of "Official Business Visitors" (OBV) to enter the buildings.

According to an April 21, 2021, email titled *House Campus Access Update to Official Business Visitor Procedures*,¹ circulated by then-Acting Sergeant-at-Arms Timothy Blodgett, OBV access is granted to individuals who are pre-registered with the SAA, present a form of identification to be checked by SAA staff, and issued a badge corresponding with the location of the pre-arranged meeting. OBVs are subsequently prevented from moving through the building without a staff escort.

Nearly one year after the OBV process began, the admission of OBVs into House Office Buildings remains slow and cumbersome. The result is a massive disruption to constituents and members due to lines that routinely stretch well beyond building entry points. Complicating matters are U.S. Capitol Police staffing shortages, like those on the week of February 21, 2022,² that prevented the operation of two out of the three approved OBV checkpoints for the core House Office Buildings. The OBV process, combined with the inability of the Majority to successfully keep to a timely schedule on the floor and a proxy voting system that unnecessarily extends vote times, has caused me to miss numerous meetings with constituents.

This process, which was ostensibly predicated on guidance from the Office of the Attending Physician (OAP) to address the COVID-19 pandemic, is woefully inadequate, poorly implemented, and chills the ability of constituents to petition their Member of Congress. There

¹ [Posting of House Sergeant-at-Arms Timothy P. Blodgett to e-dearcolleague.house.gov \(Apr. 21, 2021\)](#)

² [Posting of United States Capitol Police to USCP Alerts \(Feb. 22, 2022\)](#)

are numerous questions that, even one year after implementation, remain with the OBV system. These include:

- Why is the SAA compiling a list of individuals who are meeting with Members of Congress?
- Where is this meeting data stored and who has access to it?
- Is this meeting data maintained indefinitely? If not, how long does it remain within the House of Representatives network?

The OBV system undeniably violates the historical norms of a free and accessible legislative branch. It must be completely abandoned in favor of the open access to House Office Buildings that constituents enjoyed prior to the overly restrictive visitor policies of the last two years.

I look forward to your response to these questions and working towards finally restoring open access and transparency to the House of Representatives for the American people.

Sincerely,



Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Republican Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Rodney Davis, Ranking Member, House Committee on Administration

The Honorable William J. Walker, Sergeant-at-Arms, U.S. House of Representatives